

The Contribution of ISLAM to the Solution of WORLD-PROBLEMS

By

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In the name Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Now, as always, the open discussion of questions concerning the welfare of humanity is a fundamental principle of all progress, prosperity and peace. It was therefore in the fitness of things that Dr. Sir Mohammed Zafrullah Khan, was called upon, as a representative of Islam, by the Sixteenth Congress of the INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM in Chicago, Illinois (U. S. A.), on the 10th. August 1958, to speak upon The Islamic Solution to World-Problems.

As an exponent of Islam, Sir Mohamed is evidently ardent, elegant, bold and courageous in expounding the teachings and the doctrines of Islam. It must be said to the credit of Sir Mohammed that he very ably fits in the frame of the subject he is called upon to speak and shines like a jewel in the costume of his thoughts. The eloquence with which Sir Mohammed puts forth his stand, elevates his point of view to such eligible heights that a one actually feels the Truth of the statements he make. Indeed, Sir Mohammed is the greatest living Muslim missionary of our times.

In offering the Islamic Solutions to World-Problems, Sir Mohammed has dealt with the various aspects of the religion of Islam. Hence, this book-let is not only of informative value to our non-Muslim friends, but also a very important and inspiring document to the Muslim mind. I may beg of the readers to pass on this booklet to others for their perusal and benefit.

If Peace is to be achieved in reality, we have all to contribute our mite, that is the basic idea with which I have re-produced this lecture of a celebrated luminary Dr. Sir Mohammed Zafrullah Khan, the Vice-president of International Court of Justice, Hague.

I am grateful to my good friend whose generosity has enabled me to publish this work. May Allah reward my friend abundantly and that his philanthropy may step forward to bring out many more works like this of lasting interest.Amen.

Md. Karimullah, Naujawan,
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In the name of Allah, the Benificent, the Merciful.

The International Association for Religious Freedom are to be felicitated upon their project of calling for contributions from the representatives of five great faiths on the solution of world's problems today. The problems with which the world is faced today are many and varied and have complicated aspects. They may be approached from various directions and may be discussed at different planes. It will be agreed that one of the most important approaches that can be made to these problems is on the basis of religion. Indeed, it is essential that these problems should be studied on that basis and that the results of that study should be availed of towards working out their solutions. It is a matter of great satisfaction, therefore, that the I. A. R. F. should have provided this opportunity for all of us to get together and to pool our thinking on these problems, on the basis of our respective faiths in an effort to discover factors that might help towards a solution of these problems.

I feel greatly honoured that I should have been invited to address the Congress of the I.A.R.F. on the subject under discussion as a representative of Islam. I am fully conscious of my shortcomings and inadequacies with respect to the purpose that I am called upon to fulfil this evening. I desire, however, to assure you that what I am about to submit to you is inspired by a sincere desire to advance the object which the Congress has set itself, and is offered in a spirit of humble service.

All the great faiths whose representatives have agreed to participate in these discussions base themselves upon Divine revelation. The scriptures of Judaism, Christianity and Islam are well known; in the case of Hinduism, and Buddhism also, the revealed basis of the faiths is well recognized. The Vedas are generally accepted in Hinduism as containing revealed guidance, and Buddhism upholds the teachings of the divinely inspired Buddha as the code which should regulate various aspects of human activity.

In appraising the contribution of each of these faiths towards the solution of the world's problems today, it would be of the utmost help and benefit if each of us who has the honour to speak on behalf of one of these great faiths, were to base his presentation on the revelation which is the source of the principles and teachings inculcating by the faith he represents. For, in respect of a faith that claims to be based on revelation, all fundamental guidance must be found in or derived from the revelation on which it bases itself. Guidance derived from other sources, however beneficial, cannot, in reason, be attributed to that faith. For my part therefore, I shall endeavour to make my submission in conformity with this requirement, and shall base myself in all that I have to say on the Holy Quran and the sayings of the Holy Prophet of Islam (on whom be peace and the blessings of God). If I did not do that I would not be speaking on behalf of Islam.

The Quran is the record of the direct verbal revelation vouchsafed by God to Muhammad (the Prophet of

Islam) over a period of 23 years. The Holy Prophet's interpretation and illustration of the revelation is contained in separate records. So that, when one cites the Quran, one quotes the very words of the revelation itself. It is God speaking. When reference is made to what the Holy Prophet said or did the context will make this clear.

A UNIVERSAL MESSAGE

Many of today's problems derive from the fact that the world in which we live is rapidly becoming one world. Mankind must perforce learn to live closer together in intimate contact with each other. In other words, they must become a true brotherhood. This requires many adjustments.

A faith, if it is to fulfil man's needs of today, must therefore, transcend tribal, national racial and cultural limits, and must speak to men at a universal level. Islam does that. The Quran opens with the verse :

All worthiness of praise belongs to God. Who has created, nourishes, sustains and leads, stage by stage towards perfection, all the worlds. (1 : 2)

This presents the reader with a unified concept of humanity and of the universe. The message of Islam is not confined to any section of mankind. It embraces the whole of mankind and the entire universe :

Say, O Prophet. 'O mankind, truly I am a Messenger to you all from God to Whom belongs the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth. There is no god, but He. He gives life and He causes death'. (VII : 159)

The advent of the Holy Prophet is described in the Quran as :

“a blessing for all peoples.” (XXI : 108)

Islam proclaims a universal brotherhood of man :

“Hold fast, all together, by the rope of God. and be not divided ; and remember the favour of God which He bestowed upon you when you were enemies and He united your hearts in love, so that by His grace you become as brothers ; and you were on the brink of a pit of fire and He saved you from it. Thus does God explain to you His commandments that you may be guided.” (III : 104)

Today mankind again stands on the brink of a pit. He has, for this age also, explained His commandments that mankind may be rightly guided.

Islam recognizes as convenient and beneficial for certain purposes mankind's diversity of color, race, language etc :

Among His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the diversity of your tongues and colours. In that surely are signs for those who possess knowledge. (XXX : 23)

But it proclaims that none of these imports or confers any privilege, and announces that the only true badge of honour is the purity and righteousness of a person's life:

O, mankind we have created you from male and female and have divided you into tribes and nations for greater facility of intercourse, but the most honoured of you in the sight of God is he who is most righteous. (XLIX : 14)

Every distinction or privilege, whether pertaining to colour, race or caste, or derived from family, rank or

wealth, is abolished. Islam makes all mankind one great brotherhood, and exhorts all of us to seek and win the pleasure of God through the righteousness and beneficence of our conduct towards each other.

Thus Islam bases itself upon a fundamental unity ; unity of God, unity of the universe, unity of man and unity of life. The object of Islam is to establish a balance between all aspects of human activity and to bring about beneficent accord through adjustment.

It is not necessary to set out in any detail the teachings of Islam with regard to the unity of God. It is well recognized by now in all quarters that the central doctrine of Islam is the unity of God. God is One. He is also Unity. Everything else proceeds from Him, and is dependent upon Him. The Quran is full of exhortations calling mankind to the recognition and acceptance of the unity of God and study and appreciation of His attributes and their operation. It is not necessary to multiply quotations. One should suffice :—

He is God, and there is no god beside Him. He knows the unseen and the seen ; He is the Gracious, the Merciful. He is God, and there is no god beside Him, the Sovereign, the Holy, the Source of Peace, the Bestower of Security, the Protector, the Mighty, the Subduer, the Exalted. Holy is God, far above that which they associate with Him. He is God, the Creator, the Originator, the Fashioner ; His are the most beautiful attributes. All that is in the heavens and the earth glorifies Him, and He is the Mighty, the Wise. (LIX : 23-25)

UNITY OF UNIVERSE

Attention could be drawn to various texts which affirm the unity of creation proceeding directly from the unity of the Creator. Again, only one text need be cited here :

Blessed is He in Whose hand is the Kingdom and He has power over all things ; Who has created death and life that He might try you—which of you is best in deeds, and He is the Mighty, the Most Forgiving, Who has created the heavens in harmony. No incongruity canst thou perceive in the Gracious God. Then look again : seest thou any flaw ? Aye, look again, and yet again, thy sight will return unto thee confused and fatigued. (LXVII : 2-5)

The unity and accord of the universe derive from the unity of God :

Had there been in the heavens and the earth other gods beside God, then surely they would have been disrupted. Glorified then be God, the Lord of the Throne, above what they attribute. (XXI : 23)

Were it not for the unity of God, all would be confusion and conflict not only in the universe but even among the claimants to or partners in the godhead :

God has not taken unto Himself any son, nor is there any other god along with Him ; in that case each would have taken away what he had created, and some of them

would surely have dominated over others. Glorified be God above all that which they attribute to Him. Knower of the unseen and the seen. Exalted is He above all that which they associate with Him. (XXIII : 92-93)

Greek, Hindu and other mythologies furnish ample instances of the condition of affairs referred to in these verses.

UNITY OF MAN

The unity of man is repeatedly emphasized for instance :

O ye people, observe your duty to wards your Lord Who created you from a single soul and created therefrom its mate, and from them twain spread many men and women, (IV : 2)

And again.....

One of His signs is that He has created for you mates from among yourselves that you may find peace of mind in them and He has put love and tenderness between you. In that, surely, are signs for the people who reflect, (XXX : 22)

The universe has been created with a purpose :

We have created not the heaven and the earth and all that is between the two in play. If We had wished to find a pastime, we should surely have found it in what is with Us if at all we were to do such a thing. (XXI : 17-18)

Again.....

We have not created the heaven and the earth and all that is between them in vain. That is the view of those who deny Us. (XXXVIII : 28)

God has created the heavens and the earth in accordance with the requirements of truth, so that every soul may be requited for that which it earns ; and they shall not be wronged. (XLV : 23)

God has set up a balance, so that the truth and justice may be established :

Verily, We sent Our Messengers with manifest signs and sent down with them the Book and the Balance that mankind may conduct themselves with equity (LVII : 26)

The heaven He has raised up high and set up a measure that you may not transgress the measure. So establish the Balance with justice and fall not short of the measure.

Unfortunately, however, religion itself, instead of being made the means of promoting amity, concord and brotherhood, has often been abused for the purpose of promoting discord and hostility between different sections of mankind. The attitude of Islam towards other faiths is calculated to eliminate all discord and conflict, and to bring about and promote beneficent relationship.

BELIEF IN ALL REVELATIONS

The unity of God is in itself a powerful factor in promoting beneficent relations between mankind. of

emphasis on the unity of man tends in the same direction. But Islam does not stop there. It goes much further. It teaches that the Divine attribute of Providence has manifested itself not only in making provision for the material needs of man, but has, through the ages, made provision for his spiritual guidance also. Consequently, Islam requires belief not only in the truth and righteousness of the Holy Prophet of Islam and in the truth of the revelation vouchsafed to him, but also in the truth and righteousness of all prophets, and in the truth of all Divine revelations. This is repeatedly affirmed in the Quran. For instance :

Say, 'We believe in God and in that which has been revealed to us, and that which was revealed to Abraham and Ishmael and Issac and Jacob and the Tribes, and that which was given to Moses and to Jesus and to all the Prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and to Him we submit.'(III : 85)

As regard previous, revelations the attitude of Islam may be judged from, among others the following :

Surely, We sent down the Torah where in is guidance and light. By it did the Prophets, who were obedient to Us, judge for the Jews, as did the godly people and those learned in the Law. (V : 45)

And again.....

And We caused Jesus, son of Mary, to follow in their footsteps, fulfilling that which was revealed before him in the Torah ; and We gave him the gospel which contained guidance and light fulfilling that which was revealed before it in the Torah and a guidance and an admonition for the God-fearing.(V : 47)

FREEDOM OF CONSCIENCE

Further, Islam has proclaimed complete freedom of conscience. The Quran is unique among all the scriptures in affirming truth and righteousness of all the Prophets

and the truth of all Divine revelations, and in establishing and proclaiming the right of every human being to complete freedom of conscience :

There shall be no compulsion in religion. Surely, guidance has become distinct from error. (II : 257)

Again.....

Say, O Prophet, "The truth is from your Lord, wherefore let him who will believe, and him who will disbelieve." (XVIII : 30)

The presentation of Islam to mankind must involve no pressure or coercion. Indeed, no pressure or coercion was possible, as the Holy Prophet stood alone and unprotected against a hostile combination of tribes, and he and his handful of early followers were subjected to the most bitter, cruel and persistent persecution all through the thirteen years of his ministry at Mekka. The manner of propagation of the faith is, however, laid down clearly in the Quran :

Call unto the way of thy Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation and argue with them in a way that is best. Surely, thy Lord knows best who has strayed from His path ; and He knows those who are rightly guided. (XVI : 126)

A way of accord between all those who believe in God and in Divine revelation has been proclaimed in the Quran. The time seems to have come, it cannot be far, when the invitation extended by Islam may be availed of by the followers of other revealed faiths, for the purpose of achieving a practical brotherhood of man through common spiritual values.

Say, 'O people of the Book, come to a word equal between us and you—that we worship none but God, and that we associate no partner with Him, and that some of us take not others for lords beside God,' but if they turn away then say, 'Bear witness that we have submitted to God.' (III : 65)

As a corollary of belief in the existence and unity of God and in a divine purpose behind all creation, Islam emphasizes the accountability of man in all spheres of life, and sets up a balance between this life and the hereafter. This constitutes the essence of Islam. Whoso, therefore, affirms faith in the existence and unity of God in the life hereafter, and strives constantly after righteous action, becomes heir to the grace and mercy of God :

Surely, those who have believed, and the Jews and the Sabians and the Christians—whoso believe in God and the Last Day and acts righteously, on them shall come no fear, nor shall they grieve. (V : 70)

It will thus be seen that Islam does truly speak to man at a universal level and seeks, through the acceptance of common values which are essential to the preservation and fostering of man's moral and spiritual life to bring about accord in the religious sphere.

SOCIAL VALUES

Our problems of today are however, not confined to the religious sphere. We face many a complicated problems in the social, economic, international and other spheres. Guidance is needed with respect to all these and is supplied by Islam. We shall touch here briefly upon the values sought to be established by Islam in the three spheres that we have mentioned.

We have seen that, in the social sphere, Islam has abolished all distinctions and privileges. All mankind is one vast universal brotherhood. This is a characteristic of Muslim society which has been amply demonstrated through the centuries, and is well appreciated outside Islam. In addition to the general principles already mentioned, attention may be drawn to one or two aspects which tend in the same direction, namely, to emphasize human equality and dignity. There is no priesthood or ecclesiastical hierarchy of any description in Islam. Each individual, man or woman, may, indeed must establish direct communion with God. Islam recognizes no intermediary between man and his Maker. Even the Prophets

were only guides and teachers who taught and illustrated, in their own lives, the pattern and ideal of righteous living. They were not, in any sense, intermediaries between God and His creatures. The realization that to each of us is granted the privilege of having direct access to the Divine Majesty creates a sense of dignity which would be lacking in the absence of such realization. This is experienced very vividly by the participants in the five daily services of Islam, when each worshipper enters the House of God in the full consciousness that as a human being, he is equal to any other in the sight of God.

Again, there is a complete absence of caste or class. There are no reservations conferring privilege upon, or limiting it to, certain sections excluding others. Social intercourse is free and easy and is not inhibited by artificial requirements pertaining to dress, precedence or ceremonial. Simple living is regarded as meritorious. The more devout a Muslim is the simpler is his way of life.

Yet Islam insists upon the acceptance of life and does not permit rejection or negation of it. For instance, monasticism is not permitted in Islam. (LVII 28)

The Holy Prophet has said: "There is no monasticism in Islam. Family life is our way. He who turns away from our way is not of us."

The use of all good things is permitted, but with regulation and moderation:

O' mankind look to your adornment at every time and place of worship, and eat and drink, but be not immoderate; surely, He does not love the immoderate.

Say, 'Who has forbidden the adornment which God has produced for His servants, and the good things of His providing.....say, 'My Lord has only forbidden indecencies whether open or secret, and sin and transgression, and that you associate with God that for which He has sent down no authority, and that you say of God that of

which you have no knowledge.' (VII : 32-34)

The only prohibitions in Islam (for instance, against the use of liquor, the flesh of swine, gambling and lending money on interest) are those that are designed to safeguard society against damage or injury to physical, economic or moral health.

In fact, the definition of virtue in Islam is the beneficent use of all faculties and capacities, and the definition of vice is their abuse or misuse. Islam does not permit or approve of stultification.

ECONOMIC VALUES

In the economic sphere Islam recognizes and safeguards the institution of private property, but makes all legal ownership subject to stringent moral obligations. It teaches that all ultimate sources of wealth, namely, the earth and all its treasures and capacities, the sun, the moon, the stars, the clouds that bring rain etc., are the bounty of God, which He has provided for the benefit of his creatures.

God it is Who has subjected the sea to you that ships may sail thereon by His command, and that you may seek of His bounty and that you may be grateful. And He has subjected to you whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth; all of it. In that, surely, are signs for a people who reflect. (XLV : 13-14)

Again.....

God is He Who created the heavens and the earth and caused water to come down from the clouds and brought forth therewith fruits for your sustenance; and He has subjected to you the ships that they may sail through the sea by His command, and the rivers too has He subjected to you. And He has also subjected to you the sun and the moon, both pursuing their courses constantly. And he has subjected to you the night and the day. (XIV : 33-34)

Wealth is produced by the application of human skill, knowledge and labour to the resources which God has provided. Produced wealth must, therefore, be shared not only between capital and labour, but between these two and the general community.

ZAKAT

This is secured through the imposition of a levy which is called the *Zakat*. The meaning of the word is

“that which purifies and fosters.” The *Zakat* purifies the earnings of capital and labour by deducting from the value of the goods produced the share of the community and it fosters the welfare of the community, by its proceeds being applied towards purposes designed to secure the advancement of all sections of the people :

Take out of their wealth the legal alms so that thou mayest purify and foster them thereby. (IX : 103)

The Holy Prophet has defined the *Zakat* as a levy which is imposed upon the well to-do and is *returned* to the poorer sections of the community.

The *Zakat* is not to be confused with charity, towards which there are frequent and detailed exhortations in the Quran. (II : 262-274)

ISLAMIC ECONOMIC SYSTEM

The object of the Islamic economic system is that there should be equitable distribution and constant circulation of wealth, and that there should be no holding back :

.....so that wealth may not circulate only among those of you who are rich- (LIX : 8)

Behold, you are those who are called upon to spend in the way of God ; but of you there are some who hold back, And whoso holds back, is niggardly only against his own soul. God is Self-Sufficient, it is you who are needy. (XLVII : 39)

Spending in the way of God means spending in the service of man. The object is further advanced by the prohibition against hoarding (IX : 34) and against the lending of money on interest. (II : 276)

INHERITANCE

The Islamic system of inheritance also tends in the same direction. A Muslim may dispose of the whole of his property as he may wish during his lifetime, but he may not dispose of, even for charity, more than one third by testamentary disposition. The rest of the property must be distributed according to the prescribed rules of inheritance. Under these rules all children, the widow or the widower as the case may be, and either or both parents, if surviving, are heirs. All heirs of the same degree share alike. As a general rule, the share of a male heir is twice that of a female heir in the same degree. This is not discriminatory in effect, inasmuch as under the Islamic system, the obligation of maintaining

the family rests upon the husband and not upon the wife, even though, as often happens she may be better off in her own right than the husband.

As already observed, the system is aimed at securing the widest circulation and most equitable distribution of wealth. On the other hand, the production of wealth is not restricted. Trade, partnership, joint stock companies, and other commercial ventures and activities are lawful, and the enjoyment of a due share of the fruits thereof is ensured for those who participate in them. Every venture that puts wealth into circulation, promotes employment and fosters the welfare of the community, is legitimate and its pursuit is encouraged.

TALENTS & SKILLS

Islam recognizes, and indeed stresses, the diversity of talents, skills, initiative, enterprise etc., and, in consequence, a disparity in earnings and rewards, wealth and worldly means. (XVI : 72) In fact it teaches that diversity is part of the purpose of life and is to be used for the purpose of promoting social and economic co-operation on a beneficent basis. It is through such co-operation, and not through coveting what others excel in, that healthy progress is to be achieved :

Covet not that whereby God has made some of you excel others- Men shall have a share of that which they earn, and women shall have a share of that which they earn. Ask God of His bounty. Surely, God has perfect knowledge of all things. (IV : 33)

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

In the international sphere also, we are taught that economic development should be promoted through beneficent co-operation between different peoples, rather than through the exploitation of the resources of one people by another, inasmuch as prosperity that is achieved through the former method is alone lasting and of permanent benefit. (XX : 132)

The sancity of treaties and engagements is repeatedly stressed in the Quran, (see for instance, V : 2 and XVII : 35). The Holy Prophet set the example of the most scrupulous observance of treaties and engagements even when such observation placed the Muslims at a disadvantage and appeared likely to occasion serious damage or injury. The strict observance of the very harsh

and unequal terms of the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah is an outstanding instance.

Just and equitable treatment must be accorded in all circumstances, even to the Muslim state :

O ye who believe, be steadfast in the cause of God, bearing witness in equity : and let not a people's enmity incite you to act otherwise than with justice. Be just always, that is nearer to righteousness. And fear God. Surely, God is aware of what you do.

There is a host of directions and admonitions in the Quran designed to promote the establishment and maintenance of international peace. It would take us too far afield to draw attention to them in detail. There is, however, a very clear direction with regard to the resolving of armed conflicts which might well be followed with advantage in certain contingencies with which we might find ourselves faced. It is in the following words :

If two parties of believers should fight against each other, make peace between them ; then if one of them transgresses against the other, fight the party that transgresses until it returns to the command of God. Then, if it returns, make peace between them with equity and act justly. Verily, God loves the just. (XLIX : 10)

This means that if fighting should break out between two States, other States should intervene and should settle the terms on which peace should be restored. If a party should refuse to carry out the terms proposed, it should be treated as an aggressor. If it persists in its intransigence, force should be used against until it agrees to carry out the terms proposed, The peace terms proposed in accordance with this procedure, for the purpose of bringing an armed conflict to an end, are described as "the command of God." When the recalcitrant State submits to the award and carries it out, the matter is to be treated as concluded. No ulterior questions are to be raised as part of the settlement, nor are the intervening States to seek any advantage for themselves out of the conflict.

This is very brief outline of some of the general principles on the basis of which Islam seeks to regulate social, economic and international relations. If these and other principles inculcated by Islam for the regulations and human intercourse were generally accepted and put

into effect, most of the problems with which we are faced today would be put in course of solution. A good many of these problems are, however, magnified in consequence of the very rapid advance recently made in the fields of technology and applied science. In one sense the problems, though vastly magnified, are not entirely novel. In other words, the question is one of degree and not of kind.

The vast accession to man's power over the forces of nature has multiplied manifold his capacity for beneficent action, as well as for destruction. The process is going forward very rapidly. The problem that troubles mankind is : will those who control this power, and are in a position to determine and direct its application, be anxious and able to ensure that it shall be used for the service of man and not for his destruction ? The problem extends into many spheres. We are concerned with the answer, if any, which religion is able to furnish.

ISLAM IN THE SCIENTIFIC AGE

Through the ages religion has been the source of moral and spiritual values and standards. Since the opening of the scientific age, however, that is to say, since the start of the era of investigation and research into the operation and application of the laws of nature, it has been assumed in the West that there is a certain amount of conflict between science and religion. This sense of conflict was stressed and sharpened by incidents like that of Galileo's trial by the Holy Office and, in more recent times, by the attitude adopted towards Darwin.

In the West this supposed conflict is deemed to have been resolved by the assumption that gradually gained acceptance, that science and religion operate within their own special but well-defined spheres which do not overlap. In consequence of this erroneous assumption, religion was, in the end, confined to the regulation and performance of Divine Worship and certain rituals and ceremonials. Ministers of religion and Church authorities have made constant efforts to win back for religion its true position as the source of moral and spiritual values but signs of revival notwithstanding, there is no assurance yet that people are eager to turn to religion as the principal source of guidance in the moral and spiritual spheres. In the meantime, the West's attitude towards

religion is being very largely copied in the East.

What is the attitude of Islam towards the problem that we have set out above? We have already mentioned that there is no church hierarchy in Islam. Not only has the intellect always been free, Islam has insisted upon the application of reason and intellect to all problems which man may encounter.

The very first revelation that came to the Holy Prophet of Islam was :

Recite thou in the name of thy Lord Who created... Recite! The Lord is most generous Who taught man by the pen, taught him what he knew not. (XCVI : 2-6)

There is at every step in the Quran an exhortation towards the exercise of reason and judgment. People are invited to reflect, to ponder, to understand, etc.

He grants wisdom to whom He pleases, and whoever is granted wisdom has indeed been granted abundant good ; and none would take heed except those endowed with understanding. (II : 270)

The Holy Prophet has said :—

The pursuit of knowledge is an obligation laid upon every Muslim man and woman.

And again.....

A word of wisdom is the lost property of a Muslim. He should seize it wherever he finds it.

But the Quran does not stop short at general exhortations in support of learning and philosophy. At every step it draws attention to the phenomena of nature in support and illustration of spiritual truths, emphasizing the accord between nature and spiritual truth, thus excluding any possibility of conflict.

It goes further. It draws repeated attention to man's position as God's vicegerent upon earth, and lays emphasis upon God's bounty in making the universe subservient to man. This means that the universe is governed by laws and that, therefore, its operations are controlled and regulated, and that through research one can discover these laws and their operation. It also means that the whole of the universe and all its phenomena are at the service of man. Consequently, man must carry on research into the laws and workings of nature so as to obtain increasing mastery over the forces of nature, and to put these forces into beneficent service. There is thus no conflict bet-

ween science and religion so far as Islam is concerned.

Islam claims that its guidance is universal and comprehensive. The Quran claims that it comprises lasting commandments and teachings which are of universal application :

A Messenger of God, reciting pure scriptures, wherein are lasting commandments. (XCVIII : 3-4)

THE QURAN—A PERFECT GUIDANCE

The Quran comprises all that was revealed before it and which was of permanent and universal application. So much of it as had been forgotten and was still needed is revived in the Quran. That which was of local or temporary application has been replaced by universal commandments.

Whatever commandment We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, We bring one better than that or the like thereof. Dost thou not know that God has the power to do all that He wills. (II : 107)

This is a Book whose commandments have been made firm and have been expounded in detail by the All-Wise, All-Aware. (XI : 2)

We have¹ thus the assurance that if we turn to the Quran we shall find therein the guidance that may be needed at all stages and in all the spheres. The Quran being the very word of God is alive and dynamic like the universe, and the guidance that it provides not only keeps pace with the changing pattern of human life, but runs in advance of such changes. All that is necessary is that mankind should continue to maintain direct communion with its Maker so that Divine guidance may continue to be manifested to it.

To revert to our problem. Inasmuch as man has, within a certain sphere, been given the choice between different courses of conduct, there can be no surety that he will not make a wrong choice. But guidance has been provided, following which he may safeguard himself against making a wrong choice, or against the evil consequence of having made such a choice.

All advance in knowledge and science is a bounty of God. His law is :

If you put My bounties to beneficent use, I will, surely, multiply them unto you ; but if you abuse or misuse them, then know that My punishment is severe indeed. (XIV : 8)

The problem is, what is it that will ensure beneficent use by man of God's bounties? We have already seen that Islam insists, for this purpose, upon the certainty of faith in the unity of God, and a vivid realization of full accountability for one's conduct, both here hereafter, that is to say, faith in the life after death :

Say, O prophet, 'I am but a man like yourselves ; it is revealed to me that your God is only One God. So let him who hopes to meet his Lord act righteously, and let him join no one in the worship of his Lord. (XVIII ; 111)

THE QURAN ON TODAY'S CRISIS

In fact, there are clear and striking indications in the Quran of the crisis with which mankind is confronted today. The spiritual cause of the crisis is described as mankind's repudiation in practice of the Unity, Majesty and Power of God. The remedy indicated is that man should make his peace with his Maker and return to the true worship of the One God. All else that may be needful will then be added. In other words, to him who hath faith in the One God, all else shall be added ; while from him who hath not this faith that shall be taken which he hath.

Before we proceed to state these indications it is necessary to remind ourselves that revelation often speaks in parables and similitudes. In this connection it is of particular significance that Jesus Christ himself often spoke in parables. One reason that these parables often contain prophecies of great import, and it is of the nature of prophecy, which is designed to create and strengthen faith in the unseen, that it should be subject to interpretation. The import of what we are about to consider is, however, so clear that in today's circumstances there is not much risk of error in interpretation.

We should also remember that the events of the very brief period of his ministry spent by Jesus in the Holy Land, have come down to us in very meagre form. A great deal must have passed between him and his disciples which is not recorded in the Gospels.

Towards the end of the fifth chapter of the Quran we read as follow :—

When the disciples said, 'O Jesus, son of Mary, is thy Lord able to send down to us a table spread with food from heaven ?' he said, 'Fear God, if you are believers'.

They said, 'We desire that we may eat of it, and that our hearts be at rest and that we may know that thou hast spoken truth to us, and that we may be witness thereto. Said Jesus, son of Mary, 'O God, our Lord, send down to us a table from heaven spread with food that it may be to us a festival, to the first of us and to the last of us, and a sign from thee, and provide sustenance for us, for Thou art the best of sustainers. God said, 'Surely, I will send it down to you, but whosoever of you misuses it afterward and thus denies my favour—I will surely chastise them with a chastisement wherewith I will not chastise any other of the peoples.'(V : 113-116)

It is clear that, according to the Quran, the disciples asked Jesus to pray that God should bestow material prosperity upon his followers. The first reaction of Jesus was to warn them against making such demand, but they persisted and explained why they desired to be blessed with material prosperity, Jesus then prayed that God should bestow upon his followers material prosperity, 'to the 'first of us and to the last of us,' that is to say, that Christian peoples should enjoy long periods of material prosperity both during the early ages and also during later ages. God accepted the prayer of Jesus promised to bless the Christian peoples with two long periods of outstanding material prosperity which should be a sign from God. But He also warned that if the bounties bestowed by Him were not properly used, and the people who were the recipients of these bounties did not maintain communion with God, punishment would overtake them such as had not overtaken any other people.

No detailed comment is called for. History bears witness that the Western peoples who, since the fourth century of the Christian era, have constituted the bulk of the Christian community, have enjoyed two extended periods of outstanding material prosperity. We are now witnessing the culmination of the second of these remarkable periods. The achievements of the last quarter of a century in the fields of science and technology would have been considered impossibilities at the close of the nineteenth century. Yet these very achievements have become a source of fear and dread through the enormous power which they have suddenly placed in the hands of man.

PROPHECIES RELATING TO PRESENT CRISIS

The prophecy that we have just referred to does not stand alone. There are other indications in the Quran that when the time indicated in this prophecy draws to a close the world would be ranged in two powerful groups opposing each other :

Soon shall We attend to you, O ye two big powers.
(LV : 32)

The Holy prophet gave warning against the trial and tribulations of our present age and when asked what would be the remedy against them, said :

Keep constantly in mind the opening and the concluding verses of Surah Khaf (Chapter XVIII of the Quran) and ponder over the guidance therein contained.

The opening verses of Chapter XVIII read as follows:-

In the name of God, the Gracious, the Merciful. All praise belongs to God who has sent down the Book to His servant and has not put therein any deviation. He has made it a guardian, that it may give warning of a grievous chastisement from Him, and that it may give those who believe and act righteously the glad tidings they shall have a good reward wherein they shall abide forever. And that it may warn those who say, 'God has taken unto Himself a son. No Knowledge have they thereof nor had their fathers. They speak naught but a falsehood. So haply thou wilt grieve thyself to death for sorrow after them if they believe not in this discourse. Verily, We have made all that is on the earth as an adornment for it, that we may try them as to which of them is best in conduct. And We shall make all that is thereon a barren waste. (XVIII : 1-9)

The concluding part of Chapter XVIII reads as follows:—

On that day We shall leave some of them surge against others, and the trumpet will be blown. Then shall we gather them all together. And on that day we shall present hell, face to face, to those who believe not--those whose eyes are under a veil so as not to heed My warnings, and they cannot afford even to hear. Do those who believe not--those whose eyes are under a veil so as not to heed My warnings, and they cannot afford even to hear. Do those who believe not think that they can take My servants as protectors instead of Me? Surely, we have prepared hell as an entertainment for those who believe

not. Say shall We tell you of those who are the greatest losers in respect of their works? Those whose effort is all lost in search after things pertaining to the life of this world, and they imagine they are doing good works. Those are they who disbelieve in the signs of their Lord and in the meeting with Him, So their works are vain, and on the day of judgment We shall give them no weight. That is their reward—hell; because they disbelieved, and made a jest of My signs and My Messengers... Say, 'I am but a man like yourselves; it has been revealed to me that your God is only One God. So let him who hopes to meet his Lord act righteously, and let him join no one in the worship of his Lord.' (XVIII:100-107, 111)

The opening and concluding parts of this chapter warn against a severe chastisement which would take the form of peoples surging against each other, in consequence of which veritable hell would be let loose, and the earth would be converted into barren waste. The spiritual cause of this conflict, of this chastisement, is described as "ascribing a son to God," and "taking God's servants as protectors, instead of Him."

The remedy is indicated in the very last verse of the Chapter:—

Your God is only One God. So let him who hopes to meet his Lord act righteously, and let him join no one in the worship of his Lord.

THE CHASTISEMENT

There are further indications with regard to the nature of this chastisement which are also striking. A reference to some of them might help us to appreciate the contingency that might overtake mankind unless God's grace and mercy are sought and won within the time that may be left.

We have already drawn attention to Verse 32 in Chapter LV, which refers to two big powers. Verse 36 of the same chapter, still referring to the two powers, says:

There shall be sent against you two a flame of fire, and smoke; and you shall not be able to help yourselves.

The immediately following verses refer to the heavens being rent asunder and appearing like red hide, and men being caught between fire and smoke and fierce boiling water. Here is another clear and explicit warning:

Verily, We have ever been sending Messengers, as a mercy from the Lord.

Verily, He is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing, the Lord of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them, if you would only have faith. There is no god but He. He gives life and He causes death. He is your Lord, and the Lord of your fore-fathers.

Yet they play about in doubt. But watch thou for the day when the sky will bring forth a visible smoke that will envelope the people. This will be a painful torment. Then will the people cry: 'O Lord, remove from us the torment; truly, we are believers'. But how can they benefit by admonition when there has already come to them a Messenger, explaining things clearly, and yet they turned away from him and said, 'He is tutored, a man possessed.' We shall remove the torment for a little while, but you will certainly revert to your evil courses. On the day when We shall seize you with the great seizure, then certainly We will exact retribution. (XLIV : 6-17)

We have, save for the briefest comment, refrained from interpretation of the texts quoted both on account of limitations of time and because interpretation and detailed comment are, in the conditions of today, really unnecessary. Any thoughtful reader of the verses just read out can gather a great deal of guidance if he will reflect over them. The indications of what may overtake mankind and why, and in which direction the remedy lies, are absolutely clear.

Attention may also be invited to the opening verses of Chapter LXX which run as follows :—

In the name of God, the Gracious, the Merciful. An enquirer enquires concerning the punishment about to fall upon those who believe not, which none can repel. It is from God, Lord of great ascents. The angels and the spirit ascend to Him in a day the measure of which is fifty thousand years. So be patient with admirable patience. They see it to be far off, but We see it to be nigh. The day when the sky will become like molten copper and the mountains will become like flakes of wool; and a friend will not enquire after a friend, though they will be in sight of one another. A guilty one would fain ransom himself from the torment of that day by offering

his children, and his wife, and his brothers and his kinsfolk who shelter him, and all those who are on the earth, if only thus he might save himself. But no; surely, it is a flame of fire, stripping off the skin even to the extremities of the body. It will overtake him who turns his back and retreats and hoarded wealth and withheld it. (LXX : 1-19)

Here again, a severe chastisement is announced which would proceed from God, Lord of great ascents. It is characteristic of the Quran that wherever an attribute of God is mentioned, it has reference to the subject matter of the context. It is not without significance that the attribute "Lord of great ascent" is mentioned in connection with this warning of a severe chastisement. The nature of the chastisement is sufficiently described in the succeeding verses, but the mention of this attribute shows that the chastisement will have an element of great heights, or graduated ascents about it. The skies becoming like "molten copper" would indicate, among other things, the generation of intense heat. Mountains becoming like "flakes of wool" would indicate tremendous impacts which would scatter mountains like flakes of wool. The "stripping off of the skin even to the extremities of the body" would indicate a 'Hiroshima' the horrors of which may be multiplied many times. The swiftness with which the horrors might spread is indicated by its overtaking those who turn back and seek to escape.

It is not our object to pile horror upon horror. We desire to stress, however, that a cataclysm of unparalleled severity and destructive power is here clearly foretold. Indeed, in the circumstances of today, this is no longer a matter of speculation. Unless adequate remedies are devised and put into effect there may be no escape.

Is there a remedy?

Verse 16 of Chapter XVII of the Quran says :-

We never punish until We have sent a Messenger.

This means that a calamity on a wide scale, which has the character of punishment for the misdeeds of a people, would not overtake them until they have been warned to make amends, through a divine Messenger. It may be asked, "Has there been a warning regarding the calamity or calamity with which the world is threatened today?" In the first place, the Quran itself has set out all these warnings, some of which have been quoted above.

The Messenger through whom these warnings were given was the Holy Prophet of Islam. Now that we are threatened with the literal fulfilment of these warnings, it behoves us to pay sincere and earnest attention to them, and to draw the necessary lessons from them. If we proceed to do so, and to put our lives in accord with the Divine Will, there is the Divine Assurance that neither fear nor sorrow shall overtake us.

It so happen, however, that in this age also a *Divine Reformer* was raised to give due warning of the approach of these calamities. He called on mankind to make its peace with its Maker and to turn to righteousness before it was too late. Ample warning has been given. Few have paid heed to it so far, but the time is coming, it is fast approaching, when mankind at large must take the warning to its heart, or perish.

Remedies may be of various types. Inasmuch as the indications are that the cataclysm that is threatened would overtake mankind as the result of certain spiritual causes, the real and effective remedy is the removal of those causes. Once those causes are removed other devices will come into operation and will lead mankind out of the shadow of the cataclysm that threatens.

GOD—THE LORD OF MERCY

We must remember, and the opening verse of each chapter of the Quran reminds us, that two principle attributes of God are that He is the Lord of Grace and the Lord of Mercy. With regard to punishment and chastisement, His law is :

I shall inflict My punishment on whom I will ; but My mercy encompasses all things. (VII : 157)

Again.....

When those who believe in Our signs come to thee, says : "Peace be unto you, your Lord has charged Himself with mercy, so that whoso among you does evil ignorantly and repents thereafter and amends, then He is Most Forgiving, Merciful." (VII : 55)

God's purpose is to lead mankind into His grace and mercy : His purpose is not to punish. Misfortune and calamities overtake us in consequence of our defaults and transgressions, but the gates of God's mercy are ever open, and everyone may enter them through righteous

action and humble supplication. Even when wrong has been committed, the door of repentance is open :

Why should Good punish you, if you make proper use of His bounties and if you believe? Surely, God is Appreciating, All-Knowing (IV : 148)

Here is an assurance of great comfort :

Say, 'O My servants who have committed excesses against their own souls, despair not of the mercy of God, surely God forgives all sins. Verily, He is Most Forgiving, Merciful. Turn ye to your Lord and submit yourselves to Him, before there comes unto you punishment; for then you shall not be helped. And follow in the highest degree that which has been revealed to you from your Lord before the torment comes upon you unawares, while you perceive not. Lest a soul should say, 'O my grief for my remissness in my duty in respect of God, and surely I was among those who scoffed at His signs,' or lest it should say, 'If God had guided me I should certainly have been among the righteous,' or lest it should say, when it sees the punishment, 'Would that there were for me a return I would then be among those who act righteously.' (XXXIX ; 54-59)

TURN TO GOD

The true remedy, therefore, for the ills that afflict us today and that threaten to overwhelm us tomorrow, is for us to turn to God with the single minded purpose of making our peace with Him, having sincerely determined that in all matters whatever, our guiding rule shall be, "Thy will, and not mine." Truly we stand again at the brink of a pit of fire. God's grace and mercy alone can save us. To win His grace and mercy we must turn to Him alone the One God, ever Gracious, most Merciful, discarding all that may ever have been associated with Him and from whom mankind may at any time have brought protection, beside Him. There is no other way.

Once we turn to the One God in sincere repentance, He will lead us out of the shadows and the darkness into the light. He will guide us along the paths of peace :

O People of the Book there has come to you Our Messenger who unfolds to you much of what you had hidden of the Book, and passes over much. There has come to you indeed, from God, a Light and a clear Book.

Thereby does God guides those who seek His pleasure along the paths of peace. and leads them out of every kind of darkness into the Light by His will, and guides them along the right path. (V : 16-17)

Again,

God is the friend of those who believe; He brings them out of every kind of darkness into light. Those who believe not, their friends are the transgressors, who bring them out of light into every kind of darkness, (II : 258)

All knowledge proceeds from God. Man encompasses only so much of it as God pleases :

He knows what is before them and what is behind them ; and they encompass nothing of His knowledge extends over the heavens and the earth ; and the care of them burdens Him not. He is the High, the Great. (II : 256)

He who has, in due order, vouchsafed to man the knowledge of the properties of the atom and of the principles of fission and fusion, surely has it in His power to bestow upon man of the knowledge and comprehension, of principles and properties which may provide adequate safeguards and full immunity against the aggressive use of nuclear power :

There is not a thing but with Us are the treasures thereof, and We send it not down except in known measures. (XV : 22)

God constantly reveals Himself in a new state. Having revealed Himself as creator of nuclear power, He surely, may go on to reveal Himself as its guardian and controller ; for all is within His power and under His control. It is only by turning to Him that security may be achieved :

Of Him do beg all that are in the heavens and the earth. Every day He reveals Himself in a different state, (LV : 30)

The two powers to whom reference has been made have been warned :

If you have power to penetrate beyond the confines of the heavens and the earth, then do penetrate. But you cannot penetrate save with authority. (LV : 34)

But, with authority from on high, there is no limit to beneficent achievement :

He has given you all that you asked of him ; and if you try to count the bounties of God, you will not be able to number them. Verily, man is very unjust, very ungrateful. (XIV : 45)

He, surely, also has power to inspire the minds of those who are today in control of nuclear power, and are in a position to determine and direct its application to agree upon measures which would ensure that such power shall be used only for the beneficent service of man, and shall not be employed for his destruction. He also has power to drive away from positions of authority those who continue to resist His will, and to oppose His designs :

— Say, 'O God, Lord of Sovereignty. Thou bestowest sovereignty upon whomsoever thou pleasest : and Thou takest away sovereignty from whomsoever Thou pleasest. Thou exaltest whomsoever Thou pleasest and Thou abasest whomsoever Thou pleasest. In Their hand is all good. Thou surely hast power to do all things. Thou makest the night pass into the day, and makest the day pass into the night. Thou bringest forth the living from the dead, and bringest forth the dead from the living. And Thou bestowest upon whomsoever Thou pleasest without measure. (III : 27-28)

Such is God our Lord. Let us, therefore, turn to Him, to Him alone, The True, the Living, the One God. Let us humbly beseech Him to make our night pass into day and to bring us forth alive out of death.

O People of the Book, come to a word equal between us and you—that we worship none but God, and that we associated no partner with Him, and that some of us take not others for lords beside God. (III : 63)

Our last observation is : "All worthiness of praise belongs to God alone, Who has created, sustains, nourishes and, stage by stage, leads towards perfection, all the worlds."

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AN APPEAL

The Holy Quran has very rightly laid down a principle of all PROGRESS, it says, *"And let there be among you a body of men who should invite to godness and enjoin equity and forbid evil and it is they who shall prosper"* (Holy Quran 3 : 105).

The world, we live in, is loaded with threats and counter-threats of tearing mankind to pieces through racial and national barriers, blowing away the world with nuclear weapons and reducing everything to death, dust and ashes. Apart from that there are problems of vital importance seeking solutions from us. What could be our contribution towards building a happy and prosperous world of peace and plenty, is a matter that should engage our serious attention.

Every one is entrusted with a sacred responsibility and duty. Some may possess talents, skill and strength etc, in the shape of wealth or thoughts and some may not. As a general rule, it is very rare that a combination of these wants and needs are fulfilled in one, sincerely struggling for the greatest good of mankind through the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth. Towards the achievement of this ideal, rather the very goal of life, we have all to contribute our mite, work shoulder to shoulder, one for all and all for one, without caste, creed and colour distinctions. I therefore, appeal to all men and women, interested in the upliftment of humanity and the glory of God to shine triumphantly, to come forward and do the best they can to foster and build a really welfare State, rather ONE WORLD which ensures Peace and Safety to one and all.

Let us see, how best we can over-come our difficulties and over-power our problems. So come on, write to me earnestly what you feel and what best we could do.

May Allah bless us all and crown our efforts with success.

Yours in His command,
Md. Karimullah, Naujawan.

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